

SIKH JOURNALIST GRILLED BY INDIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS—THERE IS NO FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN INDIA

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 1999

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, India claims that it is democratic, but one of the cornerstones of democracy is freedom of the press. A recent event shows us again that there is no freedom of the press in India.

On May 11, Sukhbir Singh Osan, a journalist who has written for many papers in India and runs the website Burning Punjab, was interrogated by Indian intelligence officers for 45 minutes after he returned from a trip to the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. He came to cover the big Sikh marches in Washington, New York, and Toronto and to deliver a speech on the persecution of Christians that has been going on since Christmas Day.

Apparently, this coverage upset the Indian oligarchy. The intelligence officers who came to Mr. Osan's house said that they had "specific instructions from Delhi."

Mr. Osan has been targeted by the Indian government before. He was denied a degree he earned. His telephone has been bugged and he has received threats. He is not the only one. Reporters who exposed government abuses have received telephone threats. One reporter was told that "it is dangerous to report against the government." That was under a Congress Party government. The government controls the television and radio as well as Press Trust of India (PTI) and United News of India (UNI). How can you have a democracy if the government controls the media and tries to intimidate reporters who report news that they don't want to come out?

I thank my friend Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, for bringing this story to my attention. His office issued an excellent press release on the grilling of Mr. Osan, which I believe will be very informative to my colleagues.

How can the United States continue to support a country that claims to be democratic but does not allow freedom of the press, kills tens of thousands over their religious beliefs, joins with the world's most notorious tyrants at the United Nations against the U.S., celebrates the anniversary of its nuclear explosion, routinely violates basic human rights, and will not even allow a simple vote on the political future of the minority nations seeking their freedom? Why should such a country be a major recipient of American aid and trade? We should stop our aid to India until it respects basic human rights and we should publicly declare our support for the 17 freedom movements within India's borders.

I place the Council of Khalistan's press release on the grilling of Mr. Osan into the RECORD.

JOURNALIST GRILLED BY INDIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS

THERE IS NO FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN INDIA

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 12—Sikh journalist Sukhbir Singh Osan, who runs the website Burning Punjab, was interrogated by Indian intelligence officers after returning from a trip to the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, where he covered the Sikh 300th an-

niversary marches in Washington, New York, and Toronto and made a speech on "Recent Attacks on the Christian Community in India."

Intelligence officers grilled Mr. Osan at his home yesterday for over 45 minutes. They claimed that "we have specific instructions from Delhi." Mr. Osan stated that this action is "true to their anti-Sikh stance."

Mr. Osan has previously had his telephone bugged by the Indian government. He was denied a degree he earned because he has exposed corruption, atrocities, and acts of terrorism by the Indian government. He has received anonymous telephone threats.

"The interrogation of Sukhbir Singh Osan shows that there is no freedom of the press in India," said Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan. "Both Press Trust of India (PTI) and United News of India (UNI) are completely controlled by the Indian government," Dr. Aulakh stated. Noting that Mr. Osan has met lawmakers in both the U.S. and Canada, Dr. Aulakh said that "any more harassment of Mr. Osan will cause India big trouble."

"Reporters who put out information contrary to the government line are often threatened and harassed as Mr. Osan was yesterday," he said. "Reporters who have exposed government corruption and brutality have received anonymous telephone calls telling them that 'it is dangerous to report against the government,'" Dr. Aulakh said.

Mr. Aulakh urged the United States government to stop supporting the government of India. "India has joined with China, Russia, Cuba, and Libya in action against the U.S. at the United Nations," he noted. "India tried to build a security alliance against the United States. It recently celebrated the anniversary of its nuclear explosion and reiterated its refusal to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. India is a major human-rights violator. Amnesty International has not been allowed into the country since 1978," he pointed out. "Yet it remains one of the top recipients of U.S. aid."

The Indian government has murdered more than 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, over 200,000 Christians in Nagaland since 1988, more than 60,000 Muslims in Kashmir since 1988, and tens of thousands of Assamese, Manipuris, Tamils, Dalit "untouchables," and others. Tens of thousands of Sikhs languish in Indian jails without charge or trial, some since 1984.

"Why should the American taxpayers be forced to support a country where there is no religious freedom, no freedom of the press, and no human rights for minorities?" he asked. "Why should America support a country that is so vehemently anti-American?" he said. "The time has come for America to defend freedom in South Asia by defending Mr. Osan and other journalists, by cutting off aid to India, and by supporting the 17 freedom movements within India's artificial borders," Dr. Aulakh said.

TRIBUTE TO WILLENE C. NESBITT

HON. ROBIN HAYES

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 1999

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Willene C. Nesbitt of Concord, North Carolina for her commitment and dedication to her community.

On Saturday, May 22, 1999, Mrs. Nesbitt will be celebrating her retirement from North-east Medical Center in Concord. Mrs. Nesbitt

has worked for more than 50 years at North-east Medical Center, formerly Cabarrus Memorial Hospital, and has helped it grow and change into the fine regional hospital it is today.

The celebration on Saturday is not only a retirement celebration, but also a show of appreciation for all of her efforts in the community.

Mrs. Nesbitt has been active in the Shankletown-Sidetown Community Organization. She was one of the founding board members of this organization.

One project that she recently spearheaded was gathering members of the community and surrounding areas together to help rebuild an elderly woman's dilapidated home to make it liveable again. Her selfless acts of kindness have brought so many in our community a better life.

Mrs. Nesbitt and her husband, John C. Nesbitt, have also been active in their church, Gilmore Chapel AME Zion Church.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Willene Nesbitt in her retirement from the hospital, but hope that her community activity will only escalate with her new found free time. She truly brings a smile to the faces of the people she touches and improves the quality of life for everyone in Cabarrus County.

HONORING MRS. ELLA SCHWARTZ

HON. STEVEN T. KUYKENDALL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 1999

Mr. KUYKENDALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with sadness to remember and honor a legendary figure from my district, Mrs. Ella Schwartz. She passed away last week at the age of 80. Ella Schwartz was an icon of the city of Torrance and she has left a lasting impression on the city she called home.

Ella Schwartz was the daughter of Sam Levy, a founding father of the city of Torrance. The Sam Levy Department Store was the premier place to shop in the 1940's and 1950's. Following the death of her father in 1965, Mrs. Schwartz assumed control of the department store and in 1988 she transformed it into a women's boutique, naming it Ella's.

Ella Schwartz was actively involved in the community. She will be forever be linked to the revitalization of downtown Torrance. She was devoted to the city of Torrance, becoming a symbol of the city's heart and center.

Ella was a permanent fixture at her boutique until law year when she decided that it was time to retire and spend more time with her grandson. She was 79.

People will remember her fiery spirit and her dedication to improving the city of Torrance. She will be missed but not forgotten.

HONORING SHARI G. LAMBERT

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 1999

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a woman who has dedicated herself to improving the quality of life in my